CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE FIVE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-NINTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 29 January 1991, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. W. Rasaputram (Sri Lanka)

GE.91-60193/5353a

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 579th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

There are no speakers on the list for this plenary meeting. I should therefore like to ask whether any member wishes to address the Conference at this stage. I recognize the distinguished representative of Canada, and I give the floor to Mr. Robertson.

Mr. ROBERTSON (Canada): I thought it would be appropriate, since this is the first plenary I have been able to attend at this new session of ours, to say a few words, not of substance, about the election of Canada, in my person, to act as Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on Radiological Weapons, an honour, I might add, for me and for my delegation. I would like to apologize for not having been here earlier; I have been in Malta for a CSCE meeting on the somewhat ironic subject of the peaceful settlement of disputes and returned less than 48 hours ago, so that is why I haven't been here sooner.

I wanted to take this opportunity to give to the Conference my assurances that I will certainly use all my best endeavours to advance our work on the RW agenda, and I think we are very fortunate that we will have on the secretariat side the help of Mr. Cassandra and Ms. Cummins. I understand that the negotiations and discussions on the composition of the Bureau and the possible chairmanships of the two traditional tracks are still going on, and obviously the help of the Bureau that is eventually selected will be equally important in advancing our work, but of course it is going to be the role of the member States of the CD who participate in that work that will determine whether we get any further this year than we have in the past, as I have to admit that progress has not been particularly rapid. To an outsider it might seem that since it was possible for the CD to reach early agreement both on the mandate and the chairmanship of the Ad Hoc RW Committee the prospects for progress are good, but we all know that this is really not the case. The subjects we are working on are difficult, in some cases contentious, and it is not likely to be any easier this time around than earlier. That being said, it seems to me, however, and I just wanted to flag this for later discussions, informally with you, that there are already some possibilities for improving our chances. One difficulty in 1990 was when we used to meet early on Monday mornings. That not only conflicted with the informal weekly consultations on chemical weapons of one of our groups, and thereby perhaps deprived the RW deliberations of some inputs from smaller delegations which could have been useful, but in any event it seems to me that Monday morning is not necessarily the time when we are all at our best and ready to work as productively as we might and one of my objectives, therefore, is to consult with the group co-ordinators and the secretariat to see whether we cannot reach agreement in a mutually satisfactory way on a better time slot for work on RW. Another possibility I will mention before I close these remarks is that last year, because of various circumstances, we did not have as many meetings as we might have had; there were some 19 in all, 4 Ad Hoc Committees, 8 of track A, 7 of track B. Under our new format for 1991, with a three-session division of our labour, we have at least the possibility of holding as many as 25 meetings and therefore, although we may not reach that target, that also argues that we may be able to do somewhat more this time around.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Canada, and I would like to ask whether any other member wishes to address the Conference. I see none.

I now wish to turn to our business for today. I should like to inform you that the report of the Ad hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons, covering its inter-sessional work, will be available as document CD/1046 for our next plenary meeting on Thursday. On that occasion, the Chairman of the Ad hoc Committee, Ambassador Hyltenius of Sweden, will introduce it. At the following plenary meeting of the Conference, to be held on 7 February, I shall invite the Conference to adopt the report contained in document CD/1046. In connection with the re-establishment of the Ad hoc Committee, which was recommended to us as a priority matter in its report on the 1990 session, I am continuing my consultations on its future mandate. I do hope that it will be possible for us to agree soon on the re-establishment of this subsidiary body, so that negotiations on the "rolling text" can proceed without delay.

In addition to my consultations on the mandate for the Ad hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons, I am also proceeding with the co-ordinators to review the situation concerning the re-establishment of other subsidiary bodies. I shall report to you as soon as these consultations are concluded.

Before I adjourn this plenary meeting, I wish to inform you that we have already received 34 requests from non-members to participate in the work of the Conference and its subsidiary bodies. The latest requests received were circulated last Thursday for the information of members. Accordingly, we should be in a position to decide on those requests at our next plenary meeting on Thursday. You will recall that I have already explained the procedure to be followed on that occasion, which is identical to the practice followed last year. Before I put before the Conference for action the note by the President with all the requests attached to it, we shall hold an informal meeting for the consideration of that note. We shall thereafter resume the plenary meeting and take appropriate action.

I have no other business for today, and I now intend to adjourn this plenary meeting. The next plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament will be held on Thursday, 31 January, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 10.25 a.m.